



1-1-1941

The Social Implications in the Drama of John Galsworthy

Dorothy Ann Springer
Butler University

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.butler.edu/grtheses>

 Part of the [English Language and Literature Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Springer, Dorothy Ann, "The Social Implications in the Drama of John Galsworthy" (1941). *Graduate Thesis Collection*. Paper 391.

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate Scholarship at Digital Commons @ Butler University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Graduate Thesis Collection by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Butler University. For more information, please contact fgaede@butler.edu.

THE SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS IN THE DRAMAS OF
JOHN GALSWORTHY

by

DOROTHY ANN SPRINGER

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Arts
English Department
College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

Division of Graduate Instruction
Butler University
Indianapolis
1941

JUL 31 '41 " 31 '41

378.772

LD
701
.B82h
S676

PREFACE

For purposes of closer study, I have limited my subject to the dramas of John Galsworthy. However, it is well known that his novels are also filled with many social implications, some of which are closely correlated to those in his plays. In order that I might more fully cover my subject, I have eliminated the novels from my study.

I wish to acknowledge here my appreciation to Dr. John S. Harrison, head of the English department at Butler University, for his help and guidance in my work, and to Dr. Gino A. Ratti, Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, who helped make my study possible.

74162

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE	Page iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	iv
Chapter	
I. AN INTRODUCTORY STUDY	1
II. FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS	8
III. SOCIAL INJUSTICE	15
IV. SOCIAL DETERIORATION	20
V. THE TRAGEDY OF IDEALISM	26
VI. CASTE VS. CASTE	33
VII. CONCLUSION	40
BIBLIOGRAPHY	45

CHAPTER I

AN INTRODUCTORY STUDY

1. Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal.
2. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.
3. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.
4. Charity suffereth long and is kind; charity envieth not, charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,
5. Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;
6. Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;
7. Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.
8. Charity never faileth; but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail, whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.
9. For we know in part and we prophesy in part.
10. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.
11. When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.
12. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face; now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.
13. And now abideth faith, hope, and charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.

With these immortal words, Paul the Apostle explained the great need for charity in the world. Centuries later, John Galsworthy, an Englishman, read and believed the words of Paul, and he incorporated their ideas in his works, especially in his dramas. Practically all of his dramas are expositions of the thirteenth chapter of Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians. Galsworthy saw the need for charity, for understanding in our world today. He

wanted to communicate that need to the public, and he used, as his medium, the drama.

Mr. Galsworthy believed that drama should be written with a definite purpose in mind. He said, "A Drama must be shaped so as to have a spire of meaning. Every grouping of life and character has its inherent moral; and the business of the dramatist is so to pose the group as to bring that moral poignantly to the light of day."¹ Charity, was, as has been said, one of his basic themes. He had an extraordinary skill in revealing the inherent absurdity of man-made institutions and conventions. He was concerned with the social conventions of marriage and the general relation of man to man. He exposed "the irony of things."²

Galsworthy loved to deal with situations, a factor which is one of the first essentials of a good drama. His central situation is the moral or social problem at the bottom of the play. He practically never relied on dialogue for introducing his theories, except so far as dialogue developed and explained the situation. He depended on his characters and their actions to enforce his moral. Having chosen his situation, he proceeded to balance it with two contrasting groups, one on either side. He tended to subordinate the human interest to the moral. He carried on his propaganda almost entirely by situations.

P. P. Howe said that the drama of Mr. Galsworthy is a drama

¹Barret H. Clark, A Study of Modern Drama, New York and London: D. Appleton and Company, 1925, p. 275.

²Ibid., p. 273.

which finds its sufficient motive in the fact that things are.³ That is both its strength and weakness. The social drama, as Mr. Galsworthy wrote it, may find its complications in collective life rather than in the life of the individual; it may do altogether without unravelling. "Its danger is that it may content itself with the exhibition of institutions or sink into the promulgation of theses."⁴ Mr. Galsworthy is free of the second, but not always of the first. He had the art of skillful exhibition and social contrast. He wanted us to understand, and he makes us wonder what ought to be done about conditions.

Mr. Galsworthy wrote a drama of social distinctions. His plays sometimes take on almost the symmetry of an argument, but they remain remarkably unheated. The author had a passionate love of justice, but he was content to lead the social thought by presenting pictures of life without exaggeration. He leaves his audience to solve the problems he has presented. He looks at both sides of the question, with impartiality, and then pleads for a better understanding. Yet he never resorts to melodrama. He discards coincidence and mechanical contrivance and reduces his dialogue to simple austerity. He employs the realistic method, but does not lose, in the process, his artistry nor his spiritual discernment. His was "Realism, transcended with spiritual understanding."⁵

³P. P. Howe, Dramatic Portraits, New York: Mitchell Kennerly, 1913, p. 233.

⁴Ibid., p. 234.

⁵Nellie B. Miller, The Living Drama, New York and London: The Century Company, 1924, p. 307.

The dramas of John Galsworthy appeal more to the reason than to sentiment. He had a vitality of mind, rather than passion. He hated hypocrisy, self-righteousness, and strife. He had a highly developed artistic and moral conscience. William Lyons Phelps said, "The audience is the villain. The unpardonable sin is indifference."⁶ He aims directly at the intelligence of the spectators. His interest is in Humanity.

Critics are divided in their opinions of Mr. Galsworthy. Some believe he is unsurpassable as a dramatist, while others feel his reserve ruins the dramatic effect of his work. Clayton Hamilton said

The trouble with Mr. Galsworthy, at bottom, is that he does not really like to write plays. . . . He feels that he has certain things to say about the problems of contemporary life, that it is his duty to say these things to the public, and that these things can be said to the public most effectively through the medium of the drama. . . . There is something a little appalling in the idea of anybody writing a play from a sense of duty.⁷

Galsworthy felt the patrician's sense of responsibility for the errors of the social order. He wrote as a social investigator. "He does not know what ought to be done; but at least he can write a play to call attention to the need of doing something."⁸

On the other hand, John Galsworthy's temperament was that of a complete artist, rounded off by the emotions of a noble heart and the disquietude of a courageous thought. His criticism moves along lines to that intellectual endeavor whose example, set by Matthew

⁶William Lyons Phelps, Essays on Modern Dramatists, New York: The Macmillan Company, 1921, p. 106.

⁷Clayton Hamilton, Conversations on Contemporary Drama, New York: The Macmillan Company, 1924, p. 131.

⁸Ibid., p. 134.

Arnold, George Meredith, and Samuel Butler, is followed among the contemporaries by George Bernard Shaw and H. G. Wells; but he combines with it elements which are his own; a more thorough cosmopolitan detachment, the independence of a moral nature which looks without any prejudice at the prominent or subtle traits of the British character, and appreciates them with bold freedom; on the other hand, a fundamental moderation in which one divines, not the need of a compromise, but a many sided perception of things; a tact of the mind which never lets itself go as far as system, exaggeration, paradox, and which tempers logic with common sense. "The pity of John Galsworthy continues a thoroughly English tradition; it reminds one of Dickens, and of a whole century stirred by social compunction; it adds to that general background, to that philanthropy of so many tender souls, a more quick and intense, often painful thrill, which resembles that of the Russian novel, the glow of a fraternity in which the mysticism of the East seems to have infused its ardour, and which extends the love of life to all nature."⁹ However, this cult of sentiment is free from almost all sentimentality. The reserve of the man, the economy of the writer, check the expression of the emotion short of the limit where it would lose the merit of sobriety. The emotion in Galsworthy is intellectualized.

The theater of John Galsworthy is not a compromise; it is a supple and fine adaptation of the philosophical type to the concrete necessities of the stage. Each play is built on a frame of ideas; but these are not put on from the outside; such situations are selected

⁹Emile Legouis and Louis Cazamian, A History of English Literature, New York: The Macmillan Company, 1935, p. 1378-1379.

as will, through their spontaneous development, suggest to our minds the terms between which an abstract relation may be established. The pictures which he has drawn of the conflicts of forces or feelings, from which a susceptible conscience will realize the complex nature of duty, preserve a truly objective spirit. They stimulate reflection rather than teach a doctrine.

Mr. Galsworthy's dramas have five distinguishing characteristics. First among these is his evident sincerity. He wanted to show life steadily and as a whole, avoiding all artifice, sentimentality, and straining after effect. He was faithful and conscientious in representing reality, whether what he wrote pleased his audience or not. This was a full reaction against Victorianism. A second marked characteristic is his sympathy. He had the capacity to identify himself with the experiences of others. He is a typical representative of modern humanitarianism. His emotional nature lead him to charity, sympathy, and toleration. Third is his great impartiality. He always showed both sides of the question. Hamilton believes that his "Olympian neutrality"¹⁰ hurt his plays, because the audience wants to be partisan. Another characteristic is his prevailing irony. He constantly reminded us that, even after the spirit of fairness and impartiality has been exercised to the utmost, there is a disconcerting twist in things which cannot be wholly accounted for or eliminated. Lastly, in all of his plays is a feeling of pity and indignation. The spirit of compassion combined with hot anger may be termed the most important of Galsworthy's characteristics, although it is the

¹⁰Clayton Hamilton, Conversations on Contemporary Drama, New York: The Macmillan Company, 1924, p. 142.

least obtrusive. The plays are an indictment of the whole fabric of modern civilization, and at the same time, a passionate appeal for understanding sympathy with the innocent victims of the social system. Galsworthy wanted justice in all things; but he wanted a justice tempered with charity.

With this review of Mr. Galsworthy's purpose of writing and his characteristics, we may now turn to the social problems he has presented to us.

CHAPTER II

FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

John Galsworthy, in his plays, aimed almost exclusively at the representation of contemporary life, in its familiar, everyday aspects. To him, the humdrum world around us provided quite sufficient dramatic material for his purposes. In the first place, dramatic themes are suggested by the various family relationships of life. The loyalties or antagonisms of husband and wife, the struggle to escape from an unhappy marriage, the revolt of youth against parental authority and control, the generosity of young people and the powers of attraction they exercise on one another--these provided Galsworthy with admirable subjects for dramatic treatment.

In the play, Joy, we are introduced to Colonel Hope, a retired army officer, who is living on his pension somewhere on the River Thames above Oxford. With him are his wife, Mrs. Hope; their daughter Letty, married to Earnest Blunt, a youth of twenty-eight; Joy, aged seventeen, who is loved by Dick Merton, her senior by three years; a maidservant called Rose, and Miss Beech, or "Peachy," an old governess friend of the family. When the play opens, these are expecting the arrival of Colonel Hope's niece, Mrs. Gwyn, aged thirty-six. Mrs. Gwyn is the mother of Joy by a husband who has disappeared out of her life many years before, and she is seeking another mate, who is expected to arrive with her, in the person of the Hon. Maurice Lever, director of a mining company in South Africa.

Nothing particular happens to these people except a vivacious discussion on the re-arrangement of bedrooms to accommodate the expected guests, a dispute regarding a game of tennis, various preparations for a dance that is to take place the same evening, and, in the case of the young people, some mild love-making. Owing to its faithful portrayal of the rather banal life of ordinary persons, and the complete absence from it of anything that can be described as dramatic incident, Joy is the only play of Galsworthy's which closely, yet probably unconsciously, resembles in style the plays of Tchekhov.

And yet these characters are interesting. The sub-title tells us that Joy is "a play on the letter I." It is, really, a study of the inveterate egoism of human nature, which is certainly most conspicuous in family life. The pronoun I and its derivatives are printed in italics about forty times in the course of the play, and this emphasis of expression is assigned to each of the principal characters in turn. The taint of egoism expresses itself in a great variety of ways.

Colonel Hope's egoism is that of wounded vanity. No man in the army, he thinks, has been treated so badly as himself. He is the sort of person who will quarrel over nothing, and argue for hours whether a certain tennis-ball was out of court or not. To show his stubborn independence of opinion, he is prepared to invest a large sum of money in mining shares just because his wife and his guest, Lever, advise him against it.

Mrs. Hope has the egoism of the managing woman who likes to order people about. What worries her is not that her husband should invest in mining shares, but that he should think of doing so without

consulting her.

Blunt, on the other hand, has all the egoism of a twenty-eight year old man. He knows all about everything, and his opinions are always right. He would have everybody look at things from an impersonal standpoint; but when his comfort is disturbed, he finds it a "deuced nuisance."

Lever's egoism is that of worldly self-interest. He is prepared to sell his mining shares which are worthless, even though he harms his host by so doing. He takes the easiest path to everything. Mrs. Gwyn's egoism resembles his; it is that of a woman who demands that life shall conform to her desires. She is prepared to sacrifice the happiness of anyone if by doing so she can secure her own.

The most interesting forms of egoism are those of the young lovers', Joy and Dick Merton. Joy is petulant, wilful, and perverse. She expects everybody else to revolve around her and play the game she wants. In particular, she dislikes Lever, simply because she is jealous of him and wants her mother all to herself. Dick Merton's egoism is the subtle egoism of the lover. He truly believes his love to be special and different. Yet while he does all he can to please Joy, he never suspects he is really seeking his own happiness all the time.

These various forms of egoism, each of which defends itself on the ground that it is a "special case", are easily seen through by Miss Beech, who is the sympathetic character of the play. It is she who utters the final wisdom of the play. "We're all as hollow as that tree! When it's ourselves, it's always a special case!"¹¹ Joy brings

¹¹John Galsworthy, Joy, Act III.

out one of Galsworthy's soundest principles--most of life's troubles arise from some lack of sympathy or imaginative understanding, and this failure of understanding is due to egoistic self-absorption and the lack of love.

A Family Man is chiefly interesting as a study of the disaster which inevitably awaits the assertion of too much authority in domestic life. John Builder is an unimaginative, hot-tempered man who thinks he can control and govern his wife, his daughters, and his household in any way he likes. But to his great annoyance, "freedom" is in the air. The play reveals the progress of his disillusionment. By his use of misplaced masterfulness, he alienates his elder daughter Athene, who goes off to live with an artist, claiming to be married to him "to all intents and purposes"¹² though not in law. His younger daughter, Maud, then follows suit; since she has been told she has a "film face" she wants to enter that profession. Next to leave is Mrs. Builder, who finds she can bear her husband's ways no longer. Even the French maid, Camille, to whom Builder makes love, turns from him in disgust. Finally he is put in prison for striking his own child and assaulting a constable.

The play is absurdly improbable and even farcical, but it successfully derides the idea that a man can treat the members of his family like pieces of property. The irony of the situation lies in the impression which the boasted English family life makes on other nations. "The Englishman have his life in the family," says the French maid, Camille; "the Frenchman have his life outside. . . ."

¹²John Galsworthy, A Family Man, Act I, Scene II.

Too mooch in the family, like a rabbit in a 'utch."¹³

In addition to these two plays which revolve around family life, Galsworthy introduces domestic problems into plays on other themes. The relations which exist between husbands and wives in the various dramas are full of interest. There are scenes of acute tension between Katherine and Stephen More in The Mob, Mr. and Mrs. Hillcrest in The Skin Game, between Sir William and Lady Cheshire in The Eldest Son, and between Mr. and Mrs. Barthwick in The Silver Box. The only couple which seems really affectionate is Lord and Lady William Dromondy in The Foundations. The nagging and fault-finding wife is found in Mrs. March in Windows, and Mrs. Hope in Joy. Jim Jones in The Silver Box, John Builder in A Family Man, and George Dedmond in The Fugitive are instances of the husband who takes the upper hand with marital cruelty and lack of sympathy. Galsworthy pictures six wives who desert their husbands, but he also shows women who remain devoted in spite of the ruthless treatment they receive.

Two husbands, for very different reasons, refuse to have children by their wives. Colin Morecombe, in The Show, is afraid he will communicate insanity to his children, though this is a secret he keeps from his wife. David Roberts, in Strife, argues that "when a working man's baby is born, it's a toss-up from breath to breath whether it ever draws another, and so on all 'is life; an' when he comes to be old, it's the workhouse or the grave."¹⁴ Similarly, Faith Bly in Windows kills her infant "to save it from living."¹⁵

¹³John Galsworthy, A Family Man, Act I, Scene II.

¹⁴John Galsworthy, Strife, Act II, Scene I.

¹⁵John Galsworthy, Windows, Act II.

Bob Lemmy in The Foundations refuses to marry and bring children into the world for a like reason. "I don't want ter myke no food fer pahder."¹⁶ Usually, however, any interference with the prompting of nature in these matters is deprecated. Says Poulder, the butler in The Foundations, "Purity an' Future of the Race Campaign! So much purity there won't be a future race."¹⁷ And it is the complaint of Sylvanus Heythorp in Old English, that his daughter Adele is "too holy" ever to be married.

The youth question is an interesting one to the playwright also. First, the sons of wealthy parents show a tendency to be unworthy of their positions. Jack Barthwick in The Silver Box, Bill Cheshire in The Eldest Son, and Bob Pillin in Old English are fine examples of this. Galsworthy then introduced the spirit of revolt in youth today, its demands for freedom to live its own life regardless of traditions. Dot Cheshire in The Eldest Son is for the emancipation of her sex, and Athene and Maud Builder in A Family Man actually break their home ties. Ann Wellwyn in The Pigeon and Adele in Old English both reprimand their fathers unmercifully. On the other hand, many of Galsworthy's young people are very generous and helpful to their parents. Jill Hillcrest and Rolf Hornblower in The Skin Game tried to reconcile their parents. Edgar and Enid Anthony try to mitigate the harshness of their father in Strife. In Windows, Johnny March pleads that Faith Bly be given a chance to recover her good name in the family circle. Walter How, in Justice,

¹⁶John Galsworthy, The Foundations, Act II.

¹⁷Ibid., Act III.

argues with his father to be lenient with Falder, who has forged a check. Galsworthy's young people are chivalrously idealistic, ready to forgive, and unwilling to perpetuate the feuds of their parents. As Ralph Builder said in A Family Man, "All these young people are so queer and delightful."¹⁸

Thus it can be seen that Galsworthy knew and understood family relationships as they exist in contemporary times. He showed us all kinds of life--rich, poor, happy, unhappy, honest, dishonest, all in a very realistic manner. He wanted others to understand and to treat with charity the troubles which most families encounter.

¹⁸John Galsworthy, A Family Man, Act II.

CHAPTER III

SOCIAL INJUSTICE

A second theme which is used in John Galsworthy's plays is that of social injustice. The community as a whole is often much harsher and more cruel than the individuals who compose it. Such a community, in devising institutions and setting up machinery for its own protection and the punishment of offenders, may inflict much misery and even injustice on innocent people, although the intentions of the administrators may be humane and kind. Instances of conflict between communal rights and individual claims provide fine material for drama. Three of Mr. Galsworthy's show us social injustice in one form or another.

In The Silver Box, there is the mechanical, almost unconscious favoring of the rich at the expense of the poor in the law courts. In this, Jack Barthwick and Jim Jones are both found guilty of theft on the same evening, when they got intoxicated together. Jack took a girl's purse, and Jim a silver cigarette box from the Barthwick home. Their cases were the same in many respects, but with one important difference; Jack's father is a wealthy Liberal Member of Parliament while Jones is a loafer out of work. Mrs. Jones, the char woman at the Barthwick home, is the only person known to have been in the room when the box was found to be missing. She is suspected, and later the police inspector finds the box in her house. Jones admits the theft, and attacks the officer for trying to arrest his wife. A police court case follows. The elder Barthwick wants to keep Jack's

connection in the case quiet, so he hires a lawyer. In the end, the theft of Jack is passed over, and Jones is condemned to a month's hard labor. On reviewing the two thefts, it can be seen that they were very similar. Both were drunk when the thefts took place; both lost interest in the articles after they had been stolen; both were without any moral compunctions for what they did. The difference lies in the fact that Jones gives a truthful account of it all, while Jack resorts to forgetfulness and lying. Galsworthy was attacking the man who loves fine phrases and professes liberal principles, yet the moment his interests are threatened, turns cad. Class is pitted against class here, and the wealthy do not hesitate to destroy the poor who get in their way.

The Show demonstrates how acute may be the suffering and wrong inflicted on private individuals through the needless gratifying of public curiosity by means of the Press and other ways. Colin Morecombe, a famous flyer in the war, had shot himself, and his death caused much public interest. The detectives and newspapermen began prying into his private affairs ruthlessly. In the course of the inquiry, it is found that Morecombe had been married for four years, but that he had lived apart from his wife for the past fifteen months, and that she had been in the rooms of another man, Geoffrey Darrel, when the suicide took place. Then, they discovered that Morecombe had spent the preceding day at Richmond with Daisy Odiham, a young waitress who had been his mistress for about a year. This all caused much public interest, and the Press played the story up regardless of the feelings of those involved. Colonel Roland Morecombe's father-in-law, and an old fashioned Irish Catholic of nearly seventy, is

shocked beyond expression at learning of his daughter's secret intrigues with Darrel. Lady Morecombe, the flyer's mother, who thinks her son a hero, is agonized when she hears of her son's reputed affair with Daisy Odiham. And Daisy's father is likewise hurt and wonders why his daughter should be so publicly disgraced. Yet they cannot find a reason for the suicide. Morecombe was known to have written a letter the day before, but no one knew to whom it was sent. Finally, a Lt. Oswald, R. N., appears with the letter, which, they learn, was sent to him. In it, Morecombe revealed that he had been subject to fits of insanity, and that this was the reason for his separation from his wife, for he did not want her to know of it. So he had decided to commit suicide since his condition was getting worse.

Consider, then, how much harm had needlessly been afflicted. A dead man's reputation was ruined; the two dearest to him had their private affairs dragged before the public eye; at least three others had their finest feelings outraged; and all to no purpose. Mr. Galsworthy did not spare the Press. Journalists are introduced into five of his plays, and in no one of them do they appear in a favorable light. In The Show, Colonel Roland speaks of them as "ghoulish harpies and cats who feed a gaping public on any garbage of devil's gossip that will sell their papers."¹⁹ Mr. Brownbee in Old English says, "The Press is very peculiar--they seem to have no -- no passions."²⁰ It is the Press who leads the feeling against Stephen More in The Mob, and Faith Bly in Windows. In the latter, Johnny March complains that the papers "put in all the vice and leave out all the

¹⁹John Galsworthy, The Show, Act II, Scene I.

²⁰John Galsworthy, Old English, Act I, Scene II.

virtue and call it human nature."²¹ The play which makes it seem most abominable, however, is The Foundations, where the interviewer is shown as vulgar, calloused, fond of cliches, cheap sentimentality, and the sensational. Galsworthy did well to call attention to the suffering which the newspapers inflict, and to remind us that this social cruelty arises simply from insensitiveness and lack of imagination, the failure to enter sympathetically into the feelings of others or to put ourselves into the places of those whom we make our victims.

In The Forest, we are in the regions of high finance, and made to feel the scope of its operations and the extent of its power. In the period of the late 'nineties, just before the Boer war, when African shares are in danger of going down, Adrian Bastaple is interested in "South African Concessions" and sees that the shares will go up much in value if only the company can employ coolie labor. He is going to bring this about by diverting attention to the iniquities of the slave trade in the Belgian Central Africa. He arranges that an expedition, led by a John Strood, shall set out from the coast and bring back word of this slavery in time for the general meeting of "South African Concessions," due to be held ten months later. Strood is fine for this mission, since he is unscrupulous, and can easily stir up trouble in that territory. Suspicion is thrown off by the assurance that his expedition is being sent out to hunt up the remaining traces of Congo slave trade. On reaching Lake Albert Edward Nyanza, Strood hears a rumor that diamonds have been discovered

²¹John Galsworthy, Windows, Act II.

farther south, and he immediately sets out to find them and claim them for England. Unfortunately, he makes an enemy of a half-caste Arab girl who does not understand him or his ethics. And, as he passes through a district which is infested with swamps and cannibals, he is surrounded and killed. His death is suspected, but not known for certain by the only member of the party who survives, and who duly reports in London the complete failure of the expedition. Therefore, at the general meeting of "South African Concessions," the proposal to employ coolie labor is rejected and the shares fall.

Bastaple then engineers a report from a news agency in Lisbon to the effect that Strood has actually reached the coast, and reported the discovery of diamond fields. The shares rise, so Bastaple sells out his dummy holdings at an enormous profit before the crash of the Boer War comes. He has so covered his tracks that the trickery can never be exposed. Here again is a case of great injustice accompanied by the infliction of a vast amount of suffering. Hundreds of investors were fraudulently robbed; Strood and other members of his party lost their lives; a company of slave carriers were brutally treated, until many of them deserted and were killed; and all so that Bastaple could make a fortune.

The cases of social injustice dealt with here are very different, yet they are alike in that they show the great egoism of human nature. People fail to think in terms of common good, or to imagine the effects of their actions upon others. There is too much acquiescence in life, and not enough charity and understanding.

CHAPTER IV

SOCIAL DETERIORATION

A third sphere of interest is the social degeneration which arises almost inevitably out of social injustice. The failures and the outcasts of the social system are well known, but the reasons for their conditions should be traced. Along with this is the case of social failures after the process of deterioration is complete. The effects and the possibilities of these people make an interesting study for the dramatist. Three plays of Galsworthy deal with the subject of social deterioration. They try to show us the forces that go into the making of the outcast of society.

In Justice, Falder, the twenty-three year old junior clerk in the office of John and Walter How, a firm of solicitors, is a pale, nervous young man of weak will, but a chivalrous disposition. He is interested in the patient, long suffering Ruth Honeywill, whose husband has tried to kill her and who has escaped with her three children while he was asleep. Falder decides they should escape to South America as man and wife. He forges a check in order to get enough money to do this, fully intending to pay the money back. The theft is easily detected, however. Walter How, the son of the head of the firm, pleads that his father give Falder another chance. But John How refuses, especially when he learns that a woman is involved. He is prosecuted for felony, convicted, and committed to penal servitude for three years. Falder almost goes mad because of

the treatment he receives, and at the end of two and one-half years he is paroled. Both his health and reputation were ruined, and he cannot find a job. Ruth talks him into applying at his old firm, where Walter How talks his father into offering him a job--but John How stipulates that he give up Ruth. Each refuses to give up the other, however, since their love is the one saving element in both their lives. Then a police officer appears and charges Falder with seeking employment by means of forged references, and with failing to report to the parole board at the proper time. In despair, Falder throws himself down the stone staircase and breaks his neck.

Faith Bly in Windows was brought up by her father to "follow her instincts," and consequently had an illegitimate child when only eighteen. She suffocated the baby "to save it from living," and was imprisoned for infanticide for two years. Upon her release, she is employed as a maid in the house where her father is a window washer. No one there understands Faith. Mr. Bly is a psychological novelist who was trying to prove that "whatever is, is wrong." Mrs. March suspects and dislikes Faith from the beginning. Her son, Johnny, is an impractical idealist who has no sense of humor. He wants to save Faith, and is even prepared to marry her. Only the cook really knows her. Faith was completely unfitted for domestic service--she wants to see life. When she makes Johnny kiss her, Mrs. March insists that she leave, although Johnny tries to shield her. Finally, Faith's lover appears and even Johnny sees that he is no good. A police inspector enters and tells them that the man is a souteneur who makes a living out of the earnings of fallen women. The March family then tries to persuade Faith to stay, but she goes out saying, "There's

nothing to be done with a girl like me."²²

Clare, in The Fugitive, occupies a better social position than either Faith or Falder. She is married to George Dedmond, an average Englishman, six years older than herself, with whom she has nothing in common. Clare loves beauty, while George is very matter-of-fact. After five years of this kind of life, Clare deserts her husband, and goes to Malise, a friend who writes, for advice. She gets a job selling gloves behind the counter of a draper's shop for a while, but eventually goes to live with Malise, since she is unfitted by temperament and training to work. By the help of spies, George finds her and offers her his home again, an independent income, and even privacy of her own room. Clare's pride and her repugnance for him make her refuse. George, in revenge, starts divorce proceedings and demands high costs from Malise. This ruins Malise socially and economically, and he loses his love for Clare. Rather than embarrass him further, she leaves. When next seen, she is sitting at a table in "The Gascony" restaurant on Derby Day, neatly dressed, but with no money. A young man makes advances to her and she is about ready to yield to him when another asks her to have supper with him on the next evening. She realizes then the desperate nature of her situation, and takes poison.

These plays have six points very much in common. In the first place, no one of the three main characters was inherently vicious or at all criminally inclined. Falder came to grief because he was too chivalrously generous; Faith Bly had youth's natural craving for the joy of life; Clare felt that she had been imprisoned and needed fresh

²²John Galsworthy, Windows, Act III.

air. In ordinary circumstances, all might have led happy, useful, self-respecting lives. Secondly, heredity had much to do with the troubles of all three. Falder came from a consumptive family and was weakly neurotic from the beginning. Faith had no mother to look after her, and her father (who was usually drunk) taught her to give free play to her impulses and instincts. Clare's father was a country rector who made the home "too moral" to be enjoyable. Third, all three were seriously handicapped by the lack of money. Fourth, in all three, temperament and upbringing combined to bring about a false step. Fifth, in each there is some sympathetic bystander, but in each, he comes too late to arrest the process of deterioration. Lastly, in all three cases, the end is tragic. The plays bring a severe indictment against human justice and on the general harshness of the world.

The plays suggest that the atmosphere of a law court may be unduly callous, professional, and inhumane. There is an implied complaint that, as soon as a wrong has been done, no matter how thoughtlessly or impulsively, the retribution that follows is swift, merciless, and out of proportion to the offense committed. After the offender is actually put in jail, the treatment is unreasonably harsh, also. It is interesting to note that there was some reformation in the prison system following the production of Justice. Galsworthy also indicted man's inhumanity to man in these plays. When the unfortunate are released from prison, people will not accept them on fair or reasonable terms. Society is too hard on those who cannot fit in perfectly with the conditions imposed by conventions. As Malise said to Clare,

This great damned world, and--you! Listen! (The sound of the traffic far down below is audible in the stillness.) Into that! alone - helpless - without money. The men who work with you; the men you make friends of - d'you think they'll let you be? The men in the streets, staring at you, stopping you - pudgy, bull-necked brutes; devils with hard eyes; senile swine; and the 'chivalrous' men, like me, who don't mean you harm, but can't help seeing that you're made for love! Or suppose you don't take cover but struggle on in the open. Society! The respectable! The pious! Even those who love you! Will they let you be? Hue and cry! The hunt was joined the moment you broke away! It will never let up! Covert to covert--till they've run you down and you're back in the cart, and God pity you!²³

Galsworthy felt the individual should not be unduly restricted by society when seeking freedom for self-expression in harmless ways; and believed that society should try to comply with the needs of individuals who compose it.

Having studied some of the courses of social deterioration, there is the question of what can be done to reclaim the victims. In The Pigeon, Galsworthy brings in this problem. Wellwyn is an amiable but untidy artist who lives with his daughter, Ann, and who loves people. He is always ready to give his money or cards with his address to those who tell him sad tales. Naturally, he is often defrauded and is usually on the brink of poverty himself. Three examples are given of the kind of people who prey on him and make a pigeon of him, all coming on Christmas Eve. First is Mrs. Megan, a flower-seller who is having a hard time since she is Welsh, and is married to a Roman Catholic Atheist who is Irish. Wellwyn pities her, gives her clothes, and arranges a bed for her in the model's dressing room adjoining his studio. Next is Ferrand, a French interpreter whom Wellwyn had met in Paris and who keeps saying life is "too

²³ John Galsworthy, The Fugitive, Act II.

strong" for him. He also is given clothes and lodging. Timmy, an old cabby, then enters, drunk, but "froze to death." All three stay there, but Nellwyn cannot decide what to do with them. He calls in three social reformers, a clergyman, a professor who thinks we should support the State in helping the undeserving, and a Justice of the Peace (who thinks we should support the private organizations in assisting the deserving). They argue so over it that they completely lose sight of the individual problem and are no help at all. Meanwhile, the three like Wellwyn, but they continue to take his help without offering to do anything. Ferrand makes love to Mrs. Megan, and Timmy steals all of Wellwyn's rum. No solution can be found for them. Then Mrs. Megan tries to commit suicide by drowning, is rescued, and prosecuted for the attempt. Ann finally revolts and says they must move to a place the parasites cannot find. The closing scene shows Wellwyn tipping the furniture movers three times, and giving the three parasites his cards with his new address.

Galsworthy was noting that all three of these were condemned and shunned by society for doing what they would be freely entitled to do, and even admired for doing if they had happened to belong to a different social station. The Pigeon also suggests that the poor and unfortunate have an intense dislike and even a horror of reformatory institutions. A very obvious moral of the play is the futility of attempting to deal with social aberrations on a basis of abstract theory or general principle without taking note of the individual involved. Professional reformers too often have theories, but lack humanity; others have enough humanity, but lack judgment.

CHAPTER V

THE TRAGEDY OF IDEALISM

Next, there are the dramatic themes bound up with the tragedy of idealism. Grant the impulse of idealists and reformers to redeem their fellows and raise them a little nearer to the stars, what is likely to be the fruit of this altruistic ardor? Will the high-souled deliverer succeed in his enterprise, or will he be crucified for attempting it? Will he die a mere visionary and dreamer or will he learn through suffering to harness his energies to the best available practical means of service? Galsworthy found that dramas of absorbing interest could be constructed from themes like these.

Two of his plays dealt with what may be called the tragedy of idealism. Both represent the conflict that will take place when a man of high principle and firm conviction finds himself confronted by forces of worldliness that attempt to bully him into compromise or surrender. The individual is pitted against society. In The Mob we see the consequences which result from advocating a policy of national righteousness in time of war. In A Bit O' Love we see the consequences which result from acting upon a policy of absolute personal forgiveness in time of peace.

The central figure in The Mob is forty year old Stephen More who has been a Member of Parliament for Toulmin for nine years. He occupies the position of Under-Secretary of State, and has good prospects of being raised to Cabinet rank. But More is an idealist who holds strong views on the subject of national righteousness, and will

not change from his principles for anybody. At this time, it happens that England is on the point of declaring war which More thinks is wrong. He believes his country is about to attack a small and weak State simply for purposes of self-aggrandizement, and he is resolved to denounce such an action in the House of Commons. This causes him difficulty. His wife's father, Sir John Julian, is a General who has served in the army for fifty years. His wife's uncle, the Dean of Stour, is a parson with ardent views on military patriotism. His wife's newly-married brother, Herbert Julian, is an army officer who is among the first to be sent out in the service of his country. Two other brothers, Ralph and George, are already at the front. In spite of these domestic difficulties, however, and even though he knows it will ruin his promising political career, More goes to the House of Commons and insists on giving his speech of protest after the English troops have crossed the frontier and been badly checked in the first encounter.

He immediately becomes the center of fierce attacks and accusations. He is called many names; he is told that it is his duty to support his country whether right or wrong; the individual citizen has no more right to criticize his country for what it does, than he has to judge God; it is sometimes necessary to chastise lawless countries and defeat them for their own good; higher civilizations always tend to swallow lower ones, and the more power and territory England possesses, the better it is for all the world; the men who criticize public policy at such a time are weakening the national war effort and are friends of every country but their own. To all these arguments More answers that it is the duty of a big nation not to attack a

little one wantonly, but rather to protect it, or at least to let it alone. He says it is because he does love his country that he feels bound to speak out when it does wrong. He says the only difference between himself and the men in the trenches is that he is fighting for the country of the future, of whose higher standards of morality and justice he believes himself to be the trustee.

This stiffening attitude naturally inflames the rage of More's enemies even more. He is forced to resign his position in the House of Commons. When he appeals to the people themselves, he is mobbed. Returning home with his head cut open by some flying missile, after his six weeks' speech making campaign, he finds that even his wife Katherine has turned against him. Next he learns that Herbert Julian has been killed, and More is made to feel partly responsible for the grief that falls on the family. Even the servants will have nothing to do with him. More's wife and child depart from him and he is left alone in front of an angry mob which blasphemes him. Rather than submit tamely to this repression of reason and humanity by brute force he replies,

You -- Mob -- are the most contemptible thing under the sun.
 You are the thing that pelts down the weak; kicks
 women; howls down free speech. Brains--you have none!
 Spirit--not a ghost of it! If you are not meanness, there's
 no such thing. My country is not yours. Mine is
 that great country which shall never take toll from the
 weakness of others.²⁴

At these words, an ugly rush is made for him, and in the scuffle that follows, More is killed by a girl holding a Boy Scout's knife.

The curtain falls and rises again to reveal a granite pedestal

²⁴John Galsworthy, The Mob, Act IV.

erected to the memory of Stephen More in a London square. Inscribed on the monument are the words "Faithful to his ideal."

Although the play seems to reflect the high tension and excited feeling during the early part of the first World War, it is interesting and remarkable to learn that it was written in 1913 and actually produced before the war began. The Mob is a study of the eternal warfare always being waged between fidelity to principle and worldly compromise. More belongs to the company of idealists who are first crucified, and then glorified and made saintly.

Michael Strangway, in A Bit O' Love is an amiable, gentle, young curate who lives in the village in the West of England. He is a forgiving soul, fond of flute music, and in many ways resembles St. Francis of Assisi, a lover of birds and flowers to whom Strangway was devoted. When we first meet him, he is conducting a confirmation class in the course of which he frees from its cage an imprisoned lark which one of the girls had brought with her. At the sound of a distant cuckoo he raises his head and goes off into an absent-minded reverie; for Strangway is married and his wife Beatrice has been unfaithful to him. He married her eighteen months before, when in a London parish, and since coming to Devonshire, she has gone off to live with a former lover, Dr. Desart, the only man she ever really cared for. Beatrice herself presently appears and earnestly begs him, for her sake and her lover's, to grant her release and not insist on the publicity and disgrace of divorce proceedings. Strangway, after his experience with the lark, cannot but let her go, though it breaks his heart to do so. Immediately after losing his wife by desertion, he is called upon to console and encourage Jack Cremer, a village rustic, who has lost his

wife by death.

The news of what has happened quickly gets about and is discussed everywhere, from the drawing-room of Mrs. Bradmere, the rector's wife, to the bar of the village inn. The general view is that Strangway is a cowardly, chicken-hearted person. Had he been a man, and not a coward, he would have stood up to Dr. Desart for meddling with his wife. This view is confirmed when a sentimental poem written by Strangway is discovered and read aloud amid the laughter of those assembled in the bar. That the curate is certainly no weakling, whatever else he may be, is proved when he himself enters the public house on his way to church and throws Jarland, his accuser, through the window and onto a cucumber frame.

Strangway thus finds himself, like Stephen More, surrounded by people who completely misjudge and slander him. They feel he has no passions, no fighting. They cannot see that in the spiritual struggle going on within him, his soul is being torn to pieces. Strangway's first intention is to leave the village and go elsewhere, but he afterwards decided that it will be better for everybody if he takes his own life. He feels that he cannot be a clergyman when he has come to doubt whether there is a God or not. Therefore, he goes into a barn on a moonlight night, suspends a rope from one of the beams, and makes a noose in it. Two people, however, prevent him from carrying out his purpose. One is Tibby Jarland, a member of his confirmation class, whom he finds curled up in the hay fast asleep, and who, by her artless prattle restores him to the love of Nature. The other is Jack Cremer, the bereaved husband whom he formerly befriended, and who now, by reminding him of his own previous advice to play the

man, restores him to the love of Humanity.

Superficially, the plays seem to have nothing in common. More is a member of Parliament, Strangway is a clergyman. More lives among crowds and is confronted by the tumult and violence of city life; Strangway lives in the country, amid peaceful and beautiful scenery. More's trouble arises out of war; Strangway's trouble arises out of love.

But underneath the two plays, there is a strong resemblance. Both More and Strangway are idealists who refuse to be coerced or to lower their standards of conduct in order to please a tyrannical and misunderstanding world. Both believe in the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount, and make a real attempt to practice it in daily life. More advocates a policy of absolute righteousness in international relations, but he can convince neither Parliament nor the people of its rightness. Strangway stands out for the forgiving element in perfect love and is confronted by the antagonism of the village gossip.

The chief distinction between The Mob and A Bit O' Love lies in the different conclusions. More can find no way to escape save death. Strangway is brought to the point of suicide, but he is saved from it at the last moment by a child and a bereaved rustic who showed him "a bit o' love." Strangway is led on the path of human service and thus receives his "halo" in his lifetime; More's is delayed until the next generation. There is something to admire in both, but Strangway's motive is surely the most ideal of the two. Galsworthy leads us to believe that idealism is good up to a point but should not be pressed too far. As Mrs. March said in Windows:

"Ideals lead into the soup. And the purer they are, the hotter the soup. Don't have ideals! Have vision, just simple vision!"²⁵ If More erred, he erred because of his pride. Strangway succeeded because he followed love.

²⁵John Galsworthy, Windows, Act III.

CHAPTER VI

CASTE FEELING

Lastly, there are instances of social tragedy which arise out of caste feeling. In this case, interest is centered not on an individual, but on a class, or the ideals of a class, loyalty to which implies antagonism to some other class. Under this comes all that is involved in the struggle between Capital and Labor, between the old landowning aristocracy and the new manufacturing bourgeoisie, or between otherwise conflicting groups in a single social community. Galsworthy felt that many of their most grievous troubles arise from the characteristic English way of placing class against class. In The Eldest Son the caste feeling of a country family collides with morality. In The Skin Game caste feeling in the landowning class fights against that of the manufacturing class. Strife shows the struggle of Capital and Labor. Loyalties concerns the conflict of various forms of caste feeling with one another. Old English is the study of a personal representative of caste feeling, in its strength and in its weakness. On the other hand, kindness is commended as a corrective of caste feeling in The Foundations. And in Escape, various forms of caste feeling are overcome by the spirit of sympathy and humanity.

Conservative, aristocratic, old Sir William Cheshire in The Eldest Son comes from an old country family and is proud of it. He is very angry when he hears that his under-keeper Dunning has got

Rose Taylor, a young girl from the village, in trouble, so Dunning is dismissed. Soon it appeared, however, that Sir William's eldest son, Bill, had done the same thing to his mother's maid, Freda. Rose Taylor insists on claiming Dunning, and they are finally married; Freda, on the other hand, is willing to give up Bill, but Bill will not hear of it. He wants to marry her and go to Canada, leaving the inheritance of the estate to his younger brother, Harold. The family, however, will not stand for that. Sir William is incensed at the idea of the latest descendent of a family that comes down from the thirteenth century marrying his mother's maid. Consequently, he forbids the marriage on penalty of complete disinheritance. Freda, however, rejects Bill's proposition rather than cause so much unhappiness. Her father, outraged, tells Sir William, "I'll have no charity marriage in my family."²⁶

The real theme of the play is expressed by Dot Cheshire when she says "Morality in one eye and your title in the other."²⁷ When that is the case, strong family traditions and caste feelings are almost certain to prevail over conscience and morality. In the play we find that romantic love, when it runs counter to strong caste prejudices, may be sweet--for a while. But it is a destructive passion and is almost inevitably bound in the end to give way to the force of class feeling and dominating social interests, at the cost of much suffering and loss. The Eldest Son contrasts the codes of ethics required of the poor and of the rich.

²⁶John Galsworthy, The Eldest Son, Act III.

²⁷Ibid.

In The Skin Game, caste feeling finds its antagonist in vulgarity rather than morality. The conflict between a representative of the landowning gentry and a representative of the newly rich manufacturing class. Hillerist is a very humane landowner, but he makes no attempt to develop his property; he lives by his traditions, and is a perfect English gentleman. Hornblower is a pottery manufacturer who has bought some of Hillcrest's land, and now wants an adjoining piece called the Centry, on which he plans to build a large factory which will ruin the Hillerist property. Hornblower believes this factory will bring wealth and prominence to the village, and consequently bring him social recognition. This idea is particularly revolting to Mrs. Hillerist who dislikes Hornblower and utterly ignores his daughter-in-law Chloe, his elder son's wife. So there is a struggle between the two families, the burning issue being the Centry; they agree to play a "skin game." However, Jill Hillerist and Rolf Hornblower, the younger son, try to stop the quarrel so that they may carry on their love affairs in peace, but to no avail. Both parties stoop to low methods, but through trickery, Hornblower buys the Centry at an auction, for a tremendous price. Mrs. Hillerist is determined to have revenge; she learns that Chloe had been "a woman who went with men to get them their divorces"²⁸ before her marriage. She threatens to make this public unless Hornblower sells them the Centry for a very low price. In the end, Hornblower gives in, but has his name sullied after all, and all his social aspirations are ruined. Hillerist also feels besmirched by the quarrel; his wife had not

²⁸ John Galsworthy, The Skin Game, Act III, Scene I.

played fairly, and he had been guilty of falsehood. Chloe's chances for happiness (for she had reformed) are gone, and her husband is terribly hurt. Hillcrist put it well when he said, "When we began this fight, our hands were clean--are they clean now? What's gentility worth if it can't stand fire?" Mr. Galsworthy has shown us the futility of this kind of struggle. Neither party really won, and each suffered extreme moral degeneration, as well as losses of other kinds.

In Strife, capitalistic caste feeling encounters the class consciousness and revolt of Labor. The chief protagonists are not groups but individuals; yet they interest us because they represent slowly evolved social forces of great magnitude and importance whose coming together is full of excitement and danger. Strife is a social tragedy. The whole action takes place between noon and six on one February afternoon. The irresistible force meets the immovable object. At the opening, we are in a meeting of the Board of Directors, presided over by the relentless Anthony who has won four strikes and expects to win this one. He believes labor and capital are mortal enemies and must fight to a finish; he will hear of no compromise. Mr. Anthony has all the strength that comes from absolute convictions. The leader of the strike, Roberts, also believes in fighting to a finish. He feels the whole cause of humanity is at stake. The next scene is in the kitchen of Roberts' cottage where is shown the suffering of helpless women. Then comes the meeting of the strikers; in the midst of Roberts' eloquent speech, word is brought to him that his wife is dead. Anthony and Roberts both lose in the end--each is outvoted by his own party. A compromise is arranged under

the precise terms which were proposed before the struggle began. Thus all the sacrifices were in vain; the only thing learned was the futility of strife. The duel comes to a close with the two beaten champions staring dully at each other with a kind of stupefied respect. The parallelism of the play is perfect; each had a personal reason for continuing the strife; each had a reason arising from class consciousness; and each had a reason which may be called patriotic. The play seems to suggest that it is the leaders of the parties who continue and prolong the strikes--that the rest would soon negotiate settlements if they could. Strife is a study of nemesis--of men going too far with their offended prides, violence, and extremism, and finally being chastized.

Loyalties opens with the alarm caused in the country house of Charles and Lady Adela Winsor by the report that a robbery has been committed on one of their guests, deLevis, a rich young Jew. Other guests were General Canynge; Margaret Orme, a society girl; Ronald Dancy, a retired army captain and D. S. O., and his wife Mabel. Dancy has a grudge against deLevis because the latter had sold a horse which Dancy had given him to keep (since he could not afford it). It now appears that deLevis had lost the money given him for the horse. The police are summoned; they make an inspection, but without result. DeLevis suspects Dancy, who flatly denies the guilt. Three weeks later, deLevis was blackballed from the Jockey Club; blaming Dancy's friends for this, he takes up his charge against Dancy in court. Guilt is finally definitely traced to the accused, whose friends want him to run away to Morocco. In a fine scene, Dancy tells Mabel of his guilt and she agrees to stand by him. She is shielding him from

the police when a shot is heard in the next room and Dancy is found dead.

In Loyalties, all the characters are true to what they believe to be the best traditions of the class to which they belong. Noblest of all the loyalties, however, is that of Mabel to her husband. The chief moral of the play is expressed by Margaret Orme, "Keep faith! We've all done that. It's not enough. Loyalty to one's class comes short of what is required of us. Only sympathy and cooperation unite."²⁹

Old English is a character study of Sylvanus Heythorp, the old chairman of "The Island Navigation Company." He is shown in relation to his creditors, his fellow directors, his daughter Adela, and a woman, Rosamund Larne, the wife of his only but illegitimate son. As his old friend, Joe Pillin, wants to leave the shipping business, Heythorp persuades his own company to buy Pillin's ships, in return for which he receives a secret commission to be legally settled on his grandchildren--the children of Rosamund Larne. A crafty lawyer learns of this and blackmails Heythorp. Realizing that he stands no chance, the old man treats himself to a last feast before resigning the directorships which alone keep him independent. This banquet proves too much for him, and we never know whether his death was deliberate or not. Heythorp is the personal embodiment of caste feeling, and is interesting to us in that respect.

The Foundations is the most amusing and instructive of Galsworthy's plays. Lord and Lady Dromondy, who are luxuriously served

²⁹John Galsworthy, Loyalties, Act III.

by four footmen, a butler, and other servants, live in a palatial residence in Park Lane. In the wine cellar of the mansion is discovered what looks very much like a bomb. The times are revolutionary, and it is supposed to have been left there by a plumber, Bob Lemmy, who lives with his old mother, a seamstress, in Bethnal Green. The very rich and the very poor are thus brought together, and the interest of the play is derived, not from the story which is ridiculous, but from the views which the various characters hold regarding life in general and the revolutionary situation in particular. The general moral to be drawn is that no social order can be secure which rests, as do ours at present upon a basis of extreme poverty and sweated labor. Caste feeling in all classes of society must be overcome through the spirit of comradeship and mutual understanding.

Escape shows us that could we but put ourselves in the place of others, and act accordingly, many of our difficulties would vanish. Mark Denant, once a soldier and gentleman, but now a convict serving five years for manslaughter, escapes from jail on a foggy October afternoon. He meets with a young married woman, a judge, a picnic party, a man and his wife taking a walk, some laborers and a farmer, two maiden ladies, and finally a parson. In nearly all of them, humanity prevails over prejudice or caste feeling. He finally took refuge in a church, putting the parson in a dilemma; either he must deliver the convict to the law, or be false to his sense of humanity, or he must screen the convict and be false to the truth and his honor as a clergyman. Denant solves the difficulty by offering himself up, since he understood the parson's position. Galsworthy illustrates finely his gospel of imaginative sympathy and faith in the naturally loving spirit of humanity. Here indeed was charity.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

What must chiefly impress the reader of the plays just examined is the prevailing restlessness and complexity of Galsworthy's world. There are very few sunny tracts or smiling landscapes. All is strife, tumult, and agitation. The individual is distracted between the claims of his ideal and the claims of his family. The family is divided against itself, so that a man's worst foes are often those of his own household. The ties that bind wife to husband, children to parents, are strained to the utmost, if not broken. Loyalty to one's class involves one in ruinous complications with the members of other classes. Society falls apart into hostile camps. Privacy fights for its life against the invasion of a prying public. Fraudulent finance hurts the whole world.

In general, it may be said that the tension, friction, and injustice here revealed spring from a principle of insufficiently checked self-interest. Galsworthy's world is that produced naturally by a century of individualism and economic freedom--a world which is now fighting for its life. We have an aggregate of warring persons, and of groups of persons, which has not yet become a social organism, and which has not developed sufficiently its communal consciousness and ethics.

The people who find themselves at cross-purposes with such a society are not necessarily, in the first instance at least, of a

criminal or rebellious nature. They may simply be those whose instinctive tendencies are wholly different from those of the majority. Instead of being dominated by possessive dispositions, which society rewards, they may be ruled by creative, imaginative, and artistic dispositions, which society misunderstands, undervalues, and condemns. Their one desire may be for freedom and spontaneity of self-expression, rather than for the accumulation of wealth. As such, they find the social order organized against them; their instincts are thwarted at every turn. Finding no outlet in the ordinary relationships of life, their cravings turn inward and become embittered, perverted, and depraved. The freedom-loving individual really becomes a rebel. He is compelled to develop these qualities which set him in opposition to the society around him in self-defense.

The strange thing about the whole process is that no one is definitely responsible for this state of things. The wrong and suffering socially produced cannot be brought home to any single individual at any particular stage. The individual members of the vast mechanism of society are for the most part humane and well-disposed, yet because each is self centered and unimaginative, their combined action becomes cruel and unjust. In such cases the victim of injustice struggles helplessly against mighty agencies that are too strong for him. He is borne to his doom, not by any ultimate or external power which we may call fate, but by complicated social and economic forces which we all help to create, yet for which no one is individually and directly responsible, and which statesmen and legislators are practically powerless to control. The final result is social wastage, devitalization, despair, and death.

We find, then, in Galsworthy's plays a state of social misery and unrest, largely brought about by (a) unbalanced personal egoism and group self-centredness; (b) undue dominance of the acquisitive and possessive dispositions in the wielding of social power, the determining of social judgments, and the allocation of social punishments and rewards; and (c) the general lack of imaginative sympathy and a communal sense of the social organism as a whole. What are some of the remedies which, in Galsworthy's world, we find brought forward for the improvement of these evils?

There is little in the plays to suggest that much help is to be expected from politics. The general feeling seems to be that the State is ineffective in providing the individual with the justice and security which are necessary for the ordering of a good life. After all, political measures, as instruments of reform, cannot be in advance of the public opinion they express; and it is evident that Galsworthy, who in any case is an artist with visions rather than a politician with practical suggestions, feels that a new spirit must be created in society itself before it will be possible to give that spirit embodiment in laws and institutions.

From education, at least as it is now organized there is little to be expected also. In Galsworthy's plays, the typical product of modern elementary education is Little Aida, in The Foundations, who can recite Blake's poetry in a broad Cockney accent, and who has learned a little about playing the piano, but who has never been taught to sew or to love her neighbor, and who spends every penny she gets on the "movies." John Builder complains that he has spent great sums on the education of Athene and Maud, and the

only reward he gets is that they go away and leave him. At the other end of the scale, the public school system is condemned of being a too powerful buttress of the social prejudice, snobbery, and caste feeling which Galsworthy deplores.

Neither do the plays encourage us to look to philanthropy as a remedy for social ends. Philanthropy may be well-meaning. It may gratify the vanity of benevolent persons, and act as a soothing bribe to the discontented; but it is apt to postpone or evade justice, and to demoralize both him who gives and him who takes. The destitute characters in The Pigeon are willing to fleece philanthropists, but it is not philanthropy they really want, especially when it takes the form of penal institutions or the desire to impart to them middle-class notions of morality. What they ask for is sympathy and understanding and freedom to live their comparatively harmless lives in their own way.

Nor is organized religion much help. The clergymen who appear in Galsworthy's plays are feeble and incompetent with the exception of the parson in Escape and Michael Strangway in A Bit O' Love. This consistency of representation cannot be wholly accidental. Maud, in A Family Man, was probably right when she said, "There's only one thing wrong with Christians--they aren't."³⁰ The ethics of Christian religion are fine, but they should be practised constantly and not allowed to remain mere ethics.

In default of all these failings, what has Galsworthy to offer? The distinctive service of imaginative art. Galsworthy was not

³⁰ John Galsworthy, A Family Man, Act II.

primarily a philosopher, a politician, or a theologian. He was an artist, with an artist's vision and an artist's method and medium of expression. He felt that art tends to reconcile the individual with the universal, by exciting in him impersonal emotion. This art would bring about the charity and understanding on the part, not only of a few but of everybody. It would correct much of the unhappiness in the world today. It lies all about us, ready for use. Its form is often different, but the artist, the man who really wants to help humanity, can find and use it. Wordsworth aptly expressed these sentiments when he said, "The charities that soothe and heal and bless, lie scattered at the feet of men like flowers." They are there, ready and willing for the charitable man to use them.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Barret H. Clark, A Study of Modern Drama, New York and London: D. Appleton and Company, 1925, p. 272-279.

R. H. Coats, John Galsworthy as a Dramatic Artist, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1926.

John Galsworthy, Plays, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1929.

The Silver Box
Joy
Strife
The Eldest Son
Justice
The Little Dream
The Pigeon
The Fugitive
The Mob
A Bit O' Love
The Foundations
The Skin Game
A Family Man
Loyalties
Windows
The Forrest
Old English
The Show
Escape
The First and The Last
The Little Man
Hall-Marked
Defeat
The Sun
Punch and Go

Clayton Hamilton, Conversations on Contemporary Drama, New York: The Macmillan Company, 1924, p. 124-194.

Archibald Henderson, European Dramatists, Cincinnati: Stewart and Kidd Company, 1913, p. 467-479.

P. P. Howe, Dramatic Portraits, New York: Mitchell Kennerley, 1913, p. 231-256.

Emile Legouis and Louis Cazamian, A History of English Literature, New York: The Macmillan Company, 1935, p. 1377-1387.

Nellie B. Miller, The Living Drama, New York and London: The Century Company, 1924, p. 304-310.